

Daniel Derrin. *Rhetoric and the Familiar in Francis Bacon and John Donne*. Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013. xii + 198 pp. \$70. ISBN: 978-1-61147-603-3.

This is an ambitious and wide-ranging first book. In it, Daniel Derrin examines the rhetorical practices of Francis Bacon and John Donne “from the point of view of early modern understandings of human cognition” (2). He reconstructs this point of view both from the classical and medieval traditions to which the

sixteenth century was heir, and through the application of critical vocabulary and assumptions drawn from the cognitive turn in literary and cultural studies. In particular, he draws from the work of Francis-Noël Thomas and Mark Turner an emphasis on the interconnections between an author's choice of style and his or her awareness of an audience's mental processes.

After an introduction outlining the shape and aspirations of *Rhetoric and the Familiar*, Derrin divides his study into five chapters. The first three of these consider aspects of Renaissance and early modern rhetorical practice, arranged under the headings of "Energetic Rhetoric," "Thetical Rhetoric," and "Tropical Rhetoric." They evince broad and relevant reading in both primary and secondary literature, most of which has been well and helpfully digested — though it is unfortunate that Heinrich Plett's *Enargeia in Classical Antiquity and the Early Modern Age* (2012) appeared too late for Derrin to take account of it. In each chapter, Derrin places an emphasis on the reactions that his chosen rhetorical devices could be expected to elicit in the early modern reader or auditor. Central here is what he calls "recollection," or the author's ability to provoke members of his audience into thinking with the images of prior experience or reading. This usage elides the standard Aristotelian distinction between remembering and recollecting, but is apt enough for Derrin's ends. Occasionally, Derrin's use of jargon is wearying; he insists on "thetical rhetoric" for what another writer might deem "commonplaces," or *loci communes*. Although these three chapters use examples from Donne and Bacon to illuminate Derrin's ideas, it would be hard to construe their readings of Bacon and Donne as transformative. I would also like to have seen a greater awareness of change and continuity across the writerly careers of both authors; for instance, chapter 2 has some interesting things to say about Bacon's 1625 *Essayes* and the medieval meditative tradition, but passes over in silence Bacon's 1597 *Meditationes sacrae*.

The final two chapters are the most substantial, and offer in some measure to redress such concerns. They consider what Derrin calls "project-Bacon" and "project-Donne." Project-Bacon is concerned with "Bacon's long-standing effort to reform intellectual culture into a fresh method that would revitalize natural philosophy" (12). Project-Donne is concerned with "Donne's long-standing effort to belong to the honorable circles he wanted — the right kind of employment on the right grounds" (12). Derrin contends that although these two projects differ considerably from one another, they have in common an attempt to manipulate the rhetorically familiar: in Bacon's case, to win acceptance for his proposed reform of learning; in Donne's case, to fit in. Bacon, furthermore, offers his own theory of human cognition and of the place of rhetorical persuasion within it, while Donne demands that one read between the lines of his compositions for the rhetorical frameworks on which they rest. Although it is difficult to read a dialogue into these two chapters, each is a clear and coherent piece of scholarship in its own right. If the conclusions they draw are not novel, they are for the most part sound, and have not previously been advanced in this critical idiom. On the grounds that they neglect the contents of the *Novum organum* and the sustained seriousness of

Bacon's philosophical endeavor, one might take exception to claims of the sort that Bacon was "a 'public relations man' for science" (113), but as Derrin does not pretend to consider either Bacon or Donne in the round, to do so would be to judge his work against criteria that are not its own.

Any student of Bacon, Donne, or Renaissance rhetoric could turn to this book with profit. Even so, its scope is its weakness: *Rhetoric and the Familiar* is unsure whether it is rewriting the history of sixteenth-century rhetorical practice, or offering new readings of Bacon and Donne. Ultimately, it fails fully to attain either goal.

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